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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 001559

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
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SUBJECT: Ambassador's Call on New ALt-FM Droutsas

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CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador, State, EXEC; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador paid his initial call on incoming Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitri Droutsas October 15. Droutsas emphasized the new GoG's active foreign policy agenda, pointing to the PM's recent trip to Istanbul as a "conscious signal that the immediate neighborhood is our highest priority." The new GoG's foreign policy would look more like their 1999-2004 approach (i.e. under Papandreou's previous stewardship). The GoG supports the EU and NATO accession prospects of all the Western Balkans and will launch an initiative with a timeline to complete the process by ¶2014. Droutsas said the new GOG is ready to work with Skopje on the name issue, but needs to settle in before addressing this delicate issue. The timing of the Commission report had forced the GOG to reiterate its standard position on a name with geographic modifier used "erga omnes." He was clear that resolution of the name issue is, for the GOG, a precondition for opening negotiations with the EU. Turkey is also a high priority; the GoG wants a "new dynamism" in its relations with Turkey to move forward to resolve some of the more difficult bilateral issues. Taking the Continental Shelf dispute to the ICJ for resolution would permit progress across a range of other issues. The GoG wants a speedy solution in Cyprus, but does not support pressure under artificial deadlines. The problem will require skillful negotiations and Greece is prepared to support a resolution with words and action.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The new GoG places a high priority on successfully concluding the OCSE Chairmanship in Office. Droutsas had not been focusing on Afghanistan/Pakistan, but took the point that Greece had a strategic interest in working to stabilize those conflict regions because of the migration implications for Greece. Ambassador also encouraged MFA attention to TIP and raised need to finalize GOG approval for construction of the new badly needed pipeline at Souda Bay NSA. Attending from the Greek side were Droutsas' Chef de Cabinet Christos Panagopoulos, former Director of the MFA Balkans Desk, and Director of the Americas Desk ChrysSoula Aliferi.

MACEDONIA

¶3. (C/NF) The new GoG is making its immediate neighborhood its highest foreign policy priority - this was reflected in Papandreou's visit to Istanbul for the Southeast European Cooperation Process four days after taking office. While there, he announced GoG's intention to support a new push to get all the

Western Balkan countries into the EU by 2014, a century after the start of WW I in Sarajevo. This is an idea Droutsas said he had proposed. (Note: Droutsas was educated and lived in Austria, where in 1998-99 he worked as an advisor to former Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schussel). Droutsas was clear that the GoG wants to support Macedonia's EU and NATO accession, but was not ready to compromise on international erga omnes use; he delivered a strong plea to give the new government some time to solve this delicate issue. The new PM was willing but needed the space and time to develop his policies. He said the report forced him to respond with strong public statements that did not advance the negotiations or cause of Skopje. Resolution of the name issue "is a precondition for Macedonia to open negotiations on EU accession." Ambassador, in a later on one, pushed Droutsas to find a solution to the name issue before the December Ministerial.

TURKEY

14. (C) Turkey is also a very high priority for the new GoG. Papandreou wants to have a "new dynamism" in Greek-Turkish relations. The GoG will work to create opportunities for progress. Of course differences will have to be resolved. The PM said taking the Continental Shelf dispute to the ICJ would help start the process, and pointed out that if Turkey had any issues it wanted to raise, the ICJ is "open to all." Other issues remain under discussion and the GoG will replicate its positive approach under the previous Papandreou Foreign Ministry. Papandreou had not formally invited Erdogan to Athens, but the GoG "is working on that." They are looking for signals from the Turkish side. In response to the Ambassador's encouragement for Greece to send a positive signal to Turkey by adopting NATO approved procedures for

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no longer tagging Greek planes as hostile, Droutsas said wasn't briefed on technical issues of air safety CBMs. He promised to look into things the Greeks could do to respond to Turkish cessation of over flights of Agathonisi and Farmakonisi. He was encouraged that such cessation "shows that when it wants, the GoT can stop them!"

CYPRUS

15. (C) Papandreou will travel to Cyprus on October 19 for his first formal overseas visit. The GoG is fully committed to reunification as soon as possible. They know that the Greek Cypriots want a speedy solution too, "but not just any solution." Skillful negotiations will be required, and while a target date is useful, we must not forget that substantive differences remain to be bridged. Washington should not overestimate Greece's influence in Nicosia, but the GoG is committed to using both words and actions to advance a just solution.

OSCE

16. (C) The incoming GoG appreciated the great job its predecessor did as Chair in Office of the OSCE, and is committed to "an even better finish to the year." Droutsas had been briefed on preparations for the December Ministerial and would work hard to make it a success. The GoG anticipated that Secretary Clinton would attend, based on her comment to the PM during her congratulatory call.

US-GREECE ISSUES:

17. (SBU) Ambassador raised USG interest in the fight against trafficking in persons, and encouraged Droutsas to dedicate MFA attention to it. Droutsas pledged to do so. Ambassador also raised the need for a high level political push at the MFA to

overcome MFA legal department blockage of the construction of the new jet fuel pipeline to service the US Naval Support Area at Souda Bay, Crete. Droutsas was not aware of the issue, but with MFA America's Desk Director Aliferi, promised to look into what he could do to permit construction to move forward.

ONE ON ONE: MORE "MACEDONIA":

¶18. (C/NF) Following the general discussion, the Ambassador asked to see the Minister alone for a few minutes. He took the opportunity to impress on Droutsas the importance Washington placed on finding a mutually agreeable solution to the name issue before the December EU Council meeting. We shared the new Prime Minister's vision for keeping the Balkans on track toward EU integration and believed that another Greek veto could undermine this effort and jeopardize stability on their border. A great deal of progress had been made and it was our sense that the leadership in Skopje was more flexible now in finding a solution. We hoped the new PM would make a strong effort to get this issue resolved.

¶19. (C/NF) Droutsas said that they too would like to solve the name issue. However, they were very frustrated with Brussels and the release of the Commission's report that recommended going forward with formal accession negotiations for Macedonia. They had not even given the new government a week to engage on this and the Commission's public pronouncement had forced him to make public statements on Greek redlines and threaten a veto. This is not something that he wanted to do or thought was helpful to the atmosphere of the negotiations, but he had no choice.

¶10. (C/NF) Droutsas added, with regard to EU membership, that Greece was not alone in potential standing in the way of moving forward on Macedonia's accession negotiations; there were other EU countries that were being tougher toward accession candidates in light of concern over the pace of EU expansion.

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¶11. (C/NF) The Ambassador said U.N. negotiator Nimetz was ready to come to Athens or call negotiators to New York. Droutsas said they welcomed the negotiations, but pleaded for a little time to get organized. The Government was only week old and the PM was busy preparing for the announcement of the Government program that weekend in Parliament. However, he promised the Ambassador they were working on the issue of relations with Skopje and would get back to us shortly.
Speckhard